From Hemtrevligt.se | By Lina Norman | Photography: Peter Knutson | Published 19 November 2026

Michelle Changed Careers Midlife to Become a Hotel Concierge: “It Was So Exciting!”

No two working days are ever quite the same for Michelle Chamoun. One day she might be picking up a cake, arranging a doctor’s appointment or tracking down lost luggage. As a concierge at one of Stockholm’s best-known hotels, she knows just how to make every guest’s stay feel truly special.



“I want our guests to discover something new while they’re here and feel that sense of ‘wow!’” says Michelle, who has worked as a hotel concierge for five years. Photo: Peter Knutson

It all began when she signed up for an evening course to become a Stockholm tour guide. Michelle Chamoun grew up in Beirut and Paris and first came to Sweden at 17 because of her father’s work. At the time, she was working as an optician, but she found herself thinking, “I want to get to know Stockholm better.”

“I don’t know where I found the energy, but it was such fun!” Michelle exclaims. “I absolutely fell in love with it. I saw the city through completely different eyes.”

Meet Michelle Chamoun

Age: 57
Family: Husband, two children and a dog
Home: Stockholm
Work: Concierge and member of Les Clefs d’Or at Hotel Rival
Interests: Singing in a band that plays French music, dining out, theatre and opera

A New Career in Midlife

Michelle began showing visitors around Stockholm, and her interest in hospitality grew. When she heard about a two-year vocational course in hotel management, she thought, “Why not?” After 20 years as an optician, and with her 50th birthday approaching, she felt ready for something new.

“I handed in my notice. It was so exciting!”

She admits that the people around her had mixed reactions. Some thought she was crazy.

Michelle smiles a little. It’s early afternoon at Hotel Rival in Stockholm, the hotel owned by ABBA legend Benny Andersson, beside Mariatorget on Södermalm. Michelle has worked here for almost five years, starting at reception before moving into her current role as concierge. Even during her studies, she says, she had a different ambition from her classmates, most of whom dreamed of becoming managers.

The Appeal of Being a Concierge

“That wasn’t what I was passionate about at all. I wanted to look after people. It’s in my DNA.”

After a brief pause, Michelle continues:

“Being a concierge felt like something I’d really enjoy. I’m sociable, curious about people and speak several languages.”

A hotel concierge is there to provide guests with a personal, tailor-made service. Not long after Michelle started at Hotel Rival, she learned that the hotel’s concierge was leaving.

“I told my managers I’d love to become Rival’s concierge,” she recalls.



Hotel Rival is owned by ABBA legend Benny Andersson. Photo: Peter Knutson

And that is exactly what happened. As a concierge, no two days are alike, she says. Michelle might need to collect a cake, arrange medical help or find missing luggage. She also checks guests in and books restaurant tables.

Keeping the Human Touch in an AI World

“In a way, you become a storyteller. People want a little entertainment, not just an ordinary check-in. So much of it is about the personal connection. Rival’s guests want a warm welcome. I’m competing with AI. Personally, I wouldn’t want a robot to check me in.”

Above all, Michelle believes her job is about giving guests a stay they’ll remember.

“I want our guests to experience something new while they’re here and think, ‘Wow!’ You have to be creative, but also sensitive to what people want. It’s about finding out what interests each guest. As a concierge, you always go the extra mile.”

She remembers a French family with children who wanted an activity they could all enjoy.
“I sent them to a pottery class, and they got to spend some lovely quality time together.”

Michelle’s Top Tips for Discovering a Different Side of Stockholm

- Explore the graffiti murals in Snösätra, home to one of Europe’s largest outdoor galleries of graffiti and street art.
- Visit Olle Olsson Hagalund’s house in Hagalund, Solna. The turquoise house is now the Olle Olsson Hagalund Museum, and both the house and its surroundings evoke Montmartre in Paris.
- Head to Hagaparken to see Gustav III’s Pavilion. You might even spot Crown Princess Victoria, who sometimes goes jogging there with her bodyguards.

One American guest was particularly interested in vinyl records, so Michelle wrote him a long list of shops to explore.

“He went home to New York with two suitcases full of vinyl. It’s wonderful when you get it just right and suggest something that really suits a guest.”

Another American guest even made a new friend thanks to Michelle. Sensing her interest in art, Michelle suggested taking a boat to Fjäderholmarna, an island with several galleries and artists’ studios.

“She bought a painting and became friends with the artist, whom she later invited to visit her at home. It was real magic. She was actually just waiting for her niece, who was going to a Taylor Swift concert, and asked me if there was something she could do in the meantime. I loved that I’d picked up on her interest in art.”

The International Association Les Clefs d’Or

Michelle leans back. On her jacket lapels are two gleaming pins shaped like crossed golden keys. They are worn only by specially selected concierges who belong to the international association Les Clefs d’Or.

“It’s a long process to earn the keys,” Michelle explains.

To join the worldwide network of around 4,000 members, candidates must have worked in a hotel for five years, including at least two years as a concierge. They need recommendations from two existing members, followed by an extensive interview, a substantial written test about the association and an essay about their home city.

“I received my keys in January this year,” says Michelle. “I was absolutely delighted! The keys tell guests that Rival has someone who can offer the very best service.”



Michelle wears two crossed-gold-key pins, marking her membership in the exclusive professional association Les Clefs d’Or. Photo: Peter Knutson

Michelle is also a member of the Swedish Hotel Porters Association, one of the oldest associations of its kind in the world, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Her goal is to make guests feel as though they’re staying with a friend rather than at a hotel.
“That feeling stays with them. We build relationships, and it makes guests want to come back.”

Michelle’s Favourite Places in Stockholm

Artipelag, Rosendals Trädgård, Waldemarsudde, Millesgården and the Stockholm archipelago.

Helping Guests Even After They’ve Left

Even after their stay has ended, guests sometimes get in touch with Michelle with requests, questions or things they need help with.

“I’ve sent out so many recipes for Swedish crispbread to guests who have asked for them,” she says with a little laugh.

For Michelle, the best part of her job is knowing that she has helped guests enjoy something out of the ordinary.“It’s when you can tell they’re really happy. Maybe I’ve suggested a jazz concert somewhere unexpected, like an island in the archipelago, or a class where they can learn to bake Swedish princess cake. It’s such fun when guests say afterwards, ‘How did you know I’d love that?’”

Looking back, Michelle has no doubt that changing careers halfway through life was the right decision. But a little of the optician in her remains.

“I always keep some contact lens solution close by, just in case anyone needs it.”